

REMARKS

At the time of the Office Action dated June 8, 2006, claims 1-23 were pending in this application. Of those claims, claims 1-6, 9, 15-16, and 19-21 have been rejected, and claims 10-14 have been withdrawn. Applicants acknowledge, with appreciation, the Examiner's indication that claims 7-9 and 17-23 contain allowable subject matter.

In response, Applicants have cancelled withdrawn claims 10-14. Claim 9 has also been cancelled. Independent claim 1 has been amended to include the limitations of allowable claim 7, and consequently claims 6 and 7 have been cancelled. Applicants, therefore, respectfully submit that claim 1 is allowable over the applied prior art. Claim 8 has been amended to address a dependency issue arising from the cancellation of claim 7. Claims 2-5 and 8 depend from allowable claim 1 and are patentable over the applied prior art at least based upon that dependency.

Independent claim 15 has been amended to include the limitations of allowable claim 17, and consequently claim 17 has been cancelled. Applicants, therefore, respectfully submit that claim 15 is allowable over the applied prior art. Claims 18 and 19 have been amended to address a dependency issue arising from the cancellation of claim 17. Claims 16 and 18-19 depend from allowable claim 15 and are patentable over the applied prior art at least based upon that dependency.

With regard to the rejection of claims 9, 19 and 23 under 35 U.S.C. § 101, Applicants note that claims 9 and 23 have been cancelled, and claim 19 has been amended to include the limitations of claim 20, and consequently claim 20 has been cancelled. Claims 21-22 have also been cancelled.

Applicants have made every effort to present claims which distinguish over the prior art, and it is believed that all claims are in condition for allowance. However, Applicants invite the Examiner to call the undersigned if it is believed that a telephonic interview would expedite the prosecution of the application to an allowance. Accordingly, and in view of the foregoing remarks, Applicants hereby respectfully request reconsideration and prompt allowance of the pending claims.

Although Applicants believe that all claims are in condition for allowance, the Examiner is directed to the following statement found in M.P.E.P. § 706(II):

When an application discloses patentable subject matter and it is apparent from the claims and the applicant's arguments that the claims are intended to be directed to such patentable subject matter, but the claims in their present form cannot be allowed because of defects in form or omission of a limitation, the examiner should not stop with a bare objection or rejection of the claims. The examiner's action should be constructive in nature and when possible should offer a definite suggestion for correction.

Application No.: 09/998,023

To the extent necessary, a petition for an extension of time under 37 C.F.R. § 1.136 is hereby made. Please charge any shortage in fees due in connection with the filing of this paper, including extension of time fees, to Deposit Account 09-0461, and please credit any excess fees to such deposit account.

Date: September 8, 2006

Respectfully submitted,

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